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COMMUNICATIONS, ORIGINAL AND SELECTED.

To the Proprietors of the Belfast Magazine.

GENTLEMEN,

If you find any thing in the following sketch of an excursion to Edinburgh, by Glasgow and Stirling, in September, 1813, which is calculated to amuse those of your readers who have travelled the same road, they shall have fully answered the expectations of the author.

Yours, &c.

O—s.

THE appearance which the town of Donaghadee presents on a calm evening in summer, is extremely agreeable. The manner in which the houses are built, presents from the bay something of the appearance of an amphitheatre. The whiteness of the houses, reflected from the dark surface of the water; the apparent liveliness of the inhabitants, who are seen walking along the principal street; the cry of sailors getting under weigh, with a fair breeze, and of boatmen plying their skiffs in all directions, add beauty and variety to a scene of pleasing activity. Scarcely had I got on board the packet in which I intended to cross the channel, when a prosperous gale filled our sails, and in a few minutes we lost the pleasure of contemplating the scene which had lately afforded me so much enjoyment.

Convinced from experience that the best method of avoiding sea-sickness is to get to rest as soon as

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possible, I stretched myself on a hammock, at the same time imploring the assistance of the goddess of sleep, to bury the evils of the night in oblivion.

This, however, was a vain petition. Sleep visited not our eye-lids. "Are we half-way yet?" "Shall we soon be in Port-Patrick?" were the questions discussed at each entrance of the steward into the cabin. Patience is the most desirable of all virtues, but the worst of all to be brought into exercise. When man is discontented with his situation, or under the influence of suffering, time passes on in slow progression. Every minute was lengthened out by our impatience, till the report of a gun from the bow of the packet announced the joyful intelligence that we were approaching Port-Patrick. In a few minutes longer, by the officiousness of the boatmen, or as they are more characteristically denominated, *robbery-men*, we were safely conducted to the inn. "Sweet" says the poet, "is pleasure after pain." We now experienced the truth of the maxim. The shortness of the passage, our deliverance from sea-sickness, a returning appetite, and the prospect of something to restore the equilibrium of our stomachs, which had been destroyed by recent emetic exertions, dispelled the gloom that had settled on our countenances, and changed the pale, and in some cases ghastly physiognomy of my companions into a subject for mirth and jocularity. Port Patrick is a

A

paltry village. No attempt has been made at paving the streets, and there is little business done, except by the inn keepers. The town cannot boast of a respectable grocer's shop; and (what is rather an odd circumstance) they have not even a bakery. The inhabitants are under the necessity of purchasing bread and other articles in the neighbouring village of Stranraer. Contrast-ed with this symptom of poverty, another phenomenon in the internal economy of Port Patrick, affects a stranger with astonishment. Notwithstanding the apparent poverty of the town, and the total absence of every thing like commercial or manufacturing interest, a coffee-room has been established, which is regularly supplied with a number of Edinburgh, Irish, and London papers.

From Port-Patrick to Stranraer, the road is good, but the country, though in many places not destitute of fertility, presents a bleak appearance. The town of Stranraer itself, situated on the southern border of Loch Ryan, possesses many commercial advantages; yet the town presents no extraordinary symptoms of prosperity. The streets are narrow, and the houses irregularly built. The same thing may be remarked of all the villages on the road between Port-Patrick and Ayr. They are more or less prosperous and respectable, in proportion to the richness and fertility of their respective neighbourhood. But the uniform dullness which pervades the whole, renders them very uninteresting to the traveller.

Leaving Loch Ryan in our rear, we entered the romantic vale of Glen-app. The sublimity of the scenery of the vale and mountain exceeds description. The trees were in full luxuriance of beauty. The barren greyiness of the mountain

heath, and the dark tint of ever-greens, contrasted with the more vivid colouring of the surrounding shrubbery, variegated and beautified the landscape. In the lowest part of the valley flows a beautiful rivulet. Its banks are adorned with the exuberant foliage of trees planted in rude clusters by the fostering hand of nature. A picturesque water-fall, which passes under the highway in a deep ravine shaded by tall trees, and a shrubbery, is the last thing that interests the attention in this beautiful valley. The scenery as we passed onward, assumed a less engaging aspect. The highway is cut out of the side of the mountain. The steepness of the ascent, and the winding of the road along dangerous precipices, made us contemplate with some uneasiness the carelessness of the coachman, who was amusing himself with cracking-nuts, in the most perilous periods of our progress. A stranger is apt to overrate the dangers of the road, while those who are continually passing over the same tract, look upon them with too much indifference. The country onward is remarkable for barrenness. Nothing is to be seen but heath, and now and then a shepherd's cottage. The prospect, however, which the sea presents toward the left, is grand and extensive. The mouth of Loch Ryan; a distant prospect of the blue mountains of Erin; the abrupt appearance of the rock of Ailsa, which rises like a solitary monument from the surface of the sea; the Isle of Arran; the firth of Clyde; and the Scotch coast, as far as the harbour of Truin, bound the view in every direction.

Nothing worth mentioning interested our attention, till the fertility of the soil, and beauty of the surrounding country, intimated that we were approaching the birth-place of

Burns, the celebrated Scotch poet. The cottage is built on the highway side, and is now occupied by a miller, who shewed us the bed in which the poet was born, the hearth round which he played his youthful frolics, the table off which he eat his rustic fare, and the field in which he ploughed down the daisy. The night on which Burns was born was dark and stormy, and a few stones having fallen out of the back part of the house, they were under the necessity of removing the mother of the poet to another apartment. Sad omen of those incidents that were to affect his future welfare, and of those misfortunes which afterwards befel him ! Occupied in melancholy reflections, we took leave of the miller, and in a few minutes ascended the bridge of Doon, with Kirk Alloway before us. Both places were rendered classical by the inimitable tale of "Tam O'Shanter." The beauty of the river Doon, and the surrounding scenery, is such as might be supposed to rouse to activity a poetical genius. The banks are planted with trees to a considerable distance on both sides, the umbrageous foliage of which make a shade impervious to the heat of the sun. Hither the Scottish genius used to retire when fatigued with the cares of the world, and

" Beneath the living shade,
Such as o'er frigid Tempe wont to wave,
Or Hemus cool, reads what the muse of
these,
Perhaps, has in immortal numbers sung ;
Or what she dictates, writes."

The Scotch have been accused of stubbornness in retaining their ancient manners and customs. If there be any truth in this insinuation, it is most observable in the language and dress of the peasantry. The flat blue bonnet, with a tuft of red on the top, is still worn by the old men. The dress of the females partakes

of the same spirit, and is remarkable for grace and simplicity. The flowing drapery which hangs negligently in front, and the easy carelessness of the short gown, falling in gentle folds from the shoulders, contrasted with the tightness of the apron, which is an universal article of dress, give the Scotch girls an air of graceful neatness, which might be imitated with advantage in the higher circles of elegance and fashion.

We arrived at Ayr at a late hour in the evening. The old fashioned appearance and apparent antiquity of many of the houses, give to most of the streets an air of solemnity, which but little accords with the liveliness of their inhabitants. The town is extensive and commercial. The new bridge over the water of Ayr, is a handsome piece of architecture, and several full length figures are placed in niches between the arches. The country from Ayr to Kilmarnock is variegated with a pleasing alternation of hill and dale: beautified by the seats and pleasure-grounds of several resident noblemen, and the ruins of some ancient castles. The most remarkable of the latter, is the Castle of Dundonald, which is seen at a distance, built on a precipice at the sea-shore; and from which Lord Dundonald takes his title. Likewise the Castle of Lord Kilmarnock, whose title is now extinct, he himself having been an exile since the unfortunate year 1745. The town of Kilmarnock presents the appearance of flourishing industry. In one end of the town, nothing is to be heard but the sound of looms and shuttles. The upper part is well built. The shops are in general extensive and elegant, beyond what might be expected from the unfavourable situation of the town, for any kind of commerce. The country from Kilmarnock to within a few miles of

Glasgow, is uninteresting. Mearn's Muir is barren, and dreary beyond description. Nothing is to be seen for several miles, but the solitary posting house where the coach-horses are changed. The fields in the neighbourhood of Glasgow are very fertile, and the wealth of the town is discovered in the villas and pleasure-grounds of gentlemen and merchants, which meet the eye in every direction. The field where Queen Mary made her last effort against the rising power of the Earl of Murray, and the elm-tree from the branches of which she is said to have viewed the engagement, are shown to the traveller.

Glasgow is built in a valley. The streets are regular, well paved, and clean, and the city in all parts exhibits evident proofs of growing opulence and prosperity. An uncommon degree of public spirit has been discovered by the citizens in planning and completing an unusual number of public buildings. The new jail, the lunatic asylum, the infirmary, the college, and Hunterian museum, (the finest collection in Scotland,) Andersonian institution, &c., are buildings remarkable for extensiveness, elegance, and utility. The public institutions for the support of the more indigent parts of the community, are equally respectable. The cathedral, one of the most perfect relics of Gothic architecture in Scotland, is situated on a low ground, near the infirmary. The massiveness of the pillars which support the enormous weight of a roof, arched with stone, strikes the mind of the beholder with astonishment. The great labour it must have required, in a rude age, when the use of mechanical instruments in their present improved state, was unknown, to gather together and arrange such an immense quantity of materials, is truly wonder-

ful. It is to be accounted for only by taking a view of those principles which actuate a people groaning under the chains of ecclesiastical tyranny. The whole wealth and resources of the country were at that period in the hands of churchmen, whose pride and ostentation were demonstrated in contriving and executing undertakings of more than princely magnificence.

The country between Glasgow and Stirling, is in general fertile and pleasant. It is principally interesting, however, as having been the scene of some of the most important transactions in Scottish history. The mind of the patriot delights to dwell on those scenes where the banners of freedom were unfurled by the hardy sons of liberty in former times. Where Bruce and Wallace in many a hard fought battle, stemmed the torrent of tyranny and ambition, and delivered their country from a foreign yoke! The celebrated field of Bannockburn, situated on the banks of a rivulet of the same name, lies near the high way side, about two miles from the town of Stirling. The neighbouring country presents a delightful appearance. The sloping banks of the rivulet, on which the battle was fought, the stone on which the standard of Bruce was erected, the rising ground on which the brave Randolph defeated Sir Robert Clifford, and the Castle of Stirling, which rises at a distance in martial pride to crown the landscape, fill the mind of the beholder with mingled sensations of pleasure, regret, and admiration. Near the same place, the spot where King James III. was murdered, is shown to the stranger. The simplicity of the history of the death of James, as related by the rustics of Bannockburn, and its corresponding with the account which we have of that event in history, renders it impos-

sible to doubt concerning the circumstances attending the death of that unfortunate monarch. Lord Lindsay was one of the most faithful adherents of the king: a man, bold, generous, and careful of the life of his sovereign. "Here, Sir," said he to James, on the day previous to the battle of Sauchieburn, "here is a chosen courser, should we be defeated to-morrow, and should flight be necessary, whose swiftness and sure-footedness shall save you from the power of your enemies." The monarch accepted of the present. The morning arrived: the battle was doubtful: the king put spurs to his horse, and left his brave followers to contend with an enemy superior in numbers. On approaching the bridge of Bannockburn, an old woman happened to be lifting water with a pitcher out of the rivulet. Alarmed at the approach of a warrior clad in armour, and riding full speed, she dropped the vessel to make her escape. The horse started, the king fell from his saddle. The severity of the fall, aided by the weight of his armour, rendered him incapable of recovering himself. The old woman returned, and lending her assistance, he was conducted into a mill, and covered with her duffle. Apprehensive of the danger of his present situation, the king expressed a wish to see a priest before his death, for the purpose of taking his confession. Struck with his appearance and demeanor, the woman inquired into his birth and quality. "I," said the monarch, "was your King yesterday." The woman gave the alarm to her neighbours, and the general outcry for a priest to confess the king, reached the ears of one of the enemy's soldiers, who happened to be passing at the time. "I," said he, "am a priest, take me to the king." He was immediately conducted into the mill. He

approached the king with seeming reverence, caught him by the hand, and while speaking to him concerning the state of his wounds, treacherously plunged a dagger in his breast! Such was the end of James. Such are the effects of pusillanimity! Such the rewards of cowardice! That life which might have been nobly lost in the field of battle, was taken away by the hand of an assassin, in an obscure corner of a mill.

"Cowards die many times before their deaths;

"The valiant never taste of death but once."

The mill has been, long since, converted into a dwelling house, but the walls are the same, and the stones of which they are built discover evident marks of their antiquity.

The town of Stirling, which we now entered, is built on a very steep hill, terminating towards the West in an abrupt and inaccessible rock, on which the Castle is built, which was for a long period the favourite residence of the Scottish monarchs. The town itself is one of the most ancient in Scotland, and presents ample resources for antiquarian researches. The wall which rendered the town impregnable before the use of fire-arms, is in many places entire, and in a good state of preservation. The keys of the city gates, of which no vestiges are now to be seen, are of silver, and preserved by the citizens with a degree of care bordering on superstition. They were presented, as a testimony of their loyalty, to the Duke of Cumberland, in 1745, when he took possession of the town, and relieved the castle, which was at that time besieged by the rebels. The town has a heavy and gloomy aspect, owing to the great antiquity of many of the buildings. The house oc-

cupied by Lord Darnley, while he resided in Stirling, is to be seen, at the lower end of High-street, and was a few years since purchased for an office to the Bank of Scotland. In every part of the town, and its neighbourhood, a memento of the times that are past is presented to the observation of the curious inquirer. The castle occupies a commanding situation: inaccessible on all sides but one, which is separated from a large platform in front, by a dry-ditch and draw bridge. The apartment in which James II. murdered the Earl of Douglas, is pointed out, and the keel of the fancy-boat which carried the sweet meats into the grand saloon, in which Queen Mary was giving a superb banquet to her own nobles, and foreign ambassadors, at the baptism of James VI., is also shown to strangers. The prospect from the castle of Stirling is, beyond description, grand, beautiful, and extensive. The windings-up of the river Forth, from a great distance, through a rich and fertile valley, teeming with culture, adorned with villages, beautified country-seats, and farm houses: the Abbey of Cambuskenneth, the Stirling-hills, and no less than six or seven fields of battle, memorable in Scottish annals, constitute towards the East a landscape not to be equalled for beauty and variety. Towards the N. West, Ben lomond, Ben-venue, and Ben-ledi, are seen raising their majestic summits to the clouds. The meanderings and conflux of the Forth and Teith; Blair-drummond, formerly the country-seat of the celebrated Lord Kaimes; the moor of Dunblane, and the neighbouring hills, are also presented to the view.

From Stirling to Falkirk, a distance of about 12 miles, the country is beautified by extensive plantings; and the prosperous and wealthy appearance of the farm-houses, im-

press a pleasing idea of the advantages which result to the country from an improved state of agricultural knowledge.

After having passed through Falkirk, which presents nothing worthy of observation, we arrived at Linlithgow. The town consists principally of one street, which is intersected by narrow lanes; at the end of one of which are to be seen the ruins of the ancient Royal Palace of Linlithgow. The building is situated on the banks of a beautiful fresh-water lake, and consists of a square, ornamented with round towers at each of the corners. The apartments of James V., and the room in which the unfortunate Mary drew her first breath, are shown by a woman who appears to be well acquainted with the traditionary history of the place. The town cistern, which is built in a small square off the principal street, is a beautiful piece of workmanship. Each of the different pipes are ornamented with figures of men and animals. The design was taken from the ornamented fountain which formerly stood in the inner area of the palace.*

Leaving Linlithgow, we got into Edinburgh at a late hour of the night. Actuated by a strong impulse of curiosity, we arose before sun-rise next morning to take a view of the city. We were not disappointed in the expectation we had

* The author of these sketches would have entered into a more particular description of the design of this curious cistern, but is afraid, that, without an engraving, he could not impress an accurate idea of it upon the mind of the reader. The following is a copy of the architectural inscription:

"Erected in the year 1807, in imitation of the ancient Cross-well; and executed by Robert Gray, Edinburgh, stonemason, who wanted his right-hand."

formed. The situation of the city of Edinburgh, scattered, as it were, through a group of eminences, is truly romantic. Like Stirling, the old town of Edinburgh is built on a rising ground, which terminates in a rocky precipice, on which stands the castle. The city, however, has extended itself, during the last century, to the neighbouring eminences, Calton-hill, Arthur's-seat, and Salisbury-craigs. While, at the same time, the new town has spread itself over the level ground which lies to the north of the castle. The regularity, beauty, and cleanliness of this part of the city, forms a striking contrast with the dirtiness and irregularity of most parts of the old town. The Royal Palace of Holyrood lies in a straight line down High-street, and at the lower end of Cannongate-street. Like the palace of Linlithgow, Holyrood-house is a complete square of buildings, erected at different periods, as the style of architecture discovers. The front of the building is beautifully ornamented with large pillars, supporting an arch, which is overtopped with a beautiful imperial crown. Of the inside of the buildings, the apartments formerly occupied by Queen Mary, are the most interesting. The furniture of the rooms, the tapestry hanging in rags, the crimson bed in which the Queen lay, and the chairs of state which are still preserved, make a strong impression upon the mind, of the manners of a distant age. The private stair-case by which Lord Darnley and his accomplices ascended into the bed-chamber of the Queen, for the purpose of assassinating her favourite Rizzio, and the stains which it is pretended his blood has left on the floor,* are pointed out by the intel-

ligent old lady who conducts strangers through the apartments. One of Lord Darnley's boots, his gloves, his spear, and part of his coat of armour, are presented to the observation of the curious. While contemplating the antiquated appearance of these apartments, the mind is involuntarily conducted to that period when they were inhabited by the beautiful Queen; and to review those melancholy transactions which rendered her government as unpropitious to her own welfare and happiness, as they were to that of the people whom she attempted to govern.

To the Proprietors of the Belfast Magazine.

HAVING lately seen in your Magazine several dissertations upon Music, it might be deemed impertinent to arrest public attention again, with a subject which had received such abundant discussion. Instead, therefore, of adding any thing to what has already been advanced, I rather propose offering a few remarks in defence of your correspondent Marcellus, who I am inclined to think has suffered rather severely, though unjustly, from the attack of Porcia. He, in confirmation of his arguments upon the subject, cites a passage of Shakespeare; and is attacked by your correspondent Porcia, in a subsequent Magazine, for branding those who may differ from him in opinion, with opprobrious epithets; and in defence of his doctrine,

discover upon the floor the stains here alluded to. In order to silence any doubts which the incredulous might entertain on this subject, the sapient old lady shows them at the back of the large door which opens upon the grand stair-case, at which place, owing to the deficiency of light, it is impossible to ascertain whether the floor be white or black.

* Notwithstanding the utmost exertion of my optical abilities, I was not able to